

Deployment of Privacy-Preserving Machine Learning for Political Polling in the 2024 Presidential Election

Sam Buxbaum

Lucas M. Tassis, Lucas Boschelli, Giovanni Comarela, Mayank Varia, Mark Crovella, Dino P. Christenson

SystemPC Workshop

July 10, 2025

Overview

Overview

- We build a system for securely predicting political preferences

Overview

- We build a system for securely predicting political preferences
- We collect and analyze data from almost 8000 unique users

Overview

- We build a system for securely predicting political preferences
- We collect and analyze data from almost 8000 unique users
- All analysis takes place under MPC

Overview

- We build a system for securely predicting political preferences
- We collect and analyze data from almost 8000 unique users
- All analysis takes place under MPC

Motivation

Overview

- We build a system for securely predicting political preferences
- We collect and analyze data from almost 8000 unique users
- All analysis takes place under MPC

Motivation

- Web browsing behavior can predict voting results

Overview

- We build a system for securely predicting political preferences
- We collect and analyze data from almost 8000 unique users
- All analysis takes place under MPC

Motivation

- Web browsing behavior can predict voting results
- Quantifying the 'Comey Letter' (Comarela et al.)

Overview

- We build a system for securely predicting political preferences
- We collect and analyze data from almost 8000 unique users
- All analysis takes place under MPC

Motivation

- Web browsing behavior can predict voting results
- Quantifying the 'Comey Letter' (Comarela et al.)

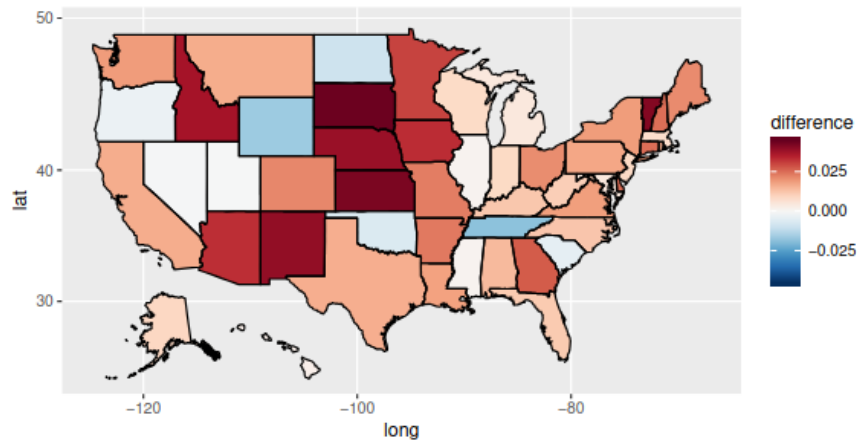


Figure 8: Impact of the 'Comey letter' at the state level.

Overview

- We build a system for securely predicting political preferences
- We collect and analyze data from almost 8000 unique users
- All analysis takes place under MPC

Motivation

- Web browsing behavior can predict voting results
- Quantifying the 'Comey Letter' (Comarela et al.)
 - The event was too close to the election for other polling methods to detect the effect

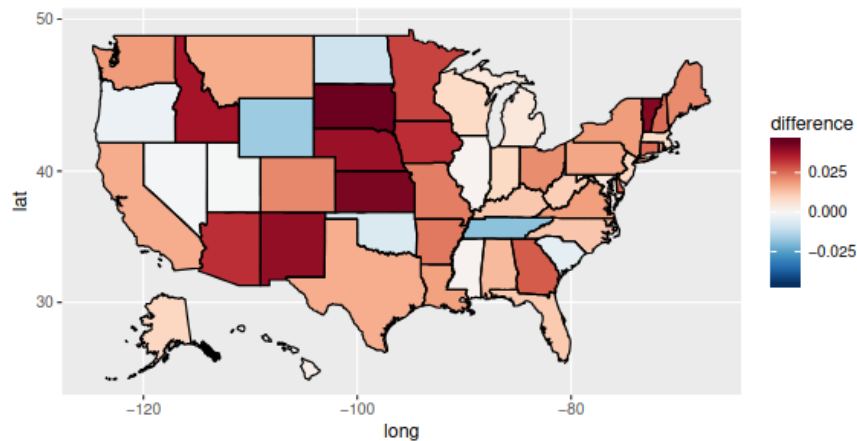


Figure 8: Impact of the 'Comey letter' at the state level.

Two Approaches to Political Polling

Two Approaches to Political Polling

Traditional Polling

Slow

Expensive

Coarse-grained insights

Two Approaches to Political Polling

Traditional Polling

Slow

Expensive

Coarse-grained insights

VS

Web Behavior Analysis

Immediate

Cheap

Fine-grained insights

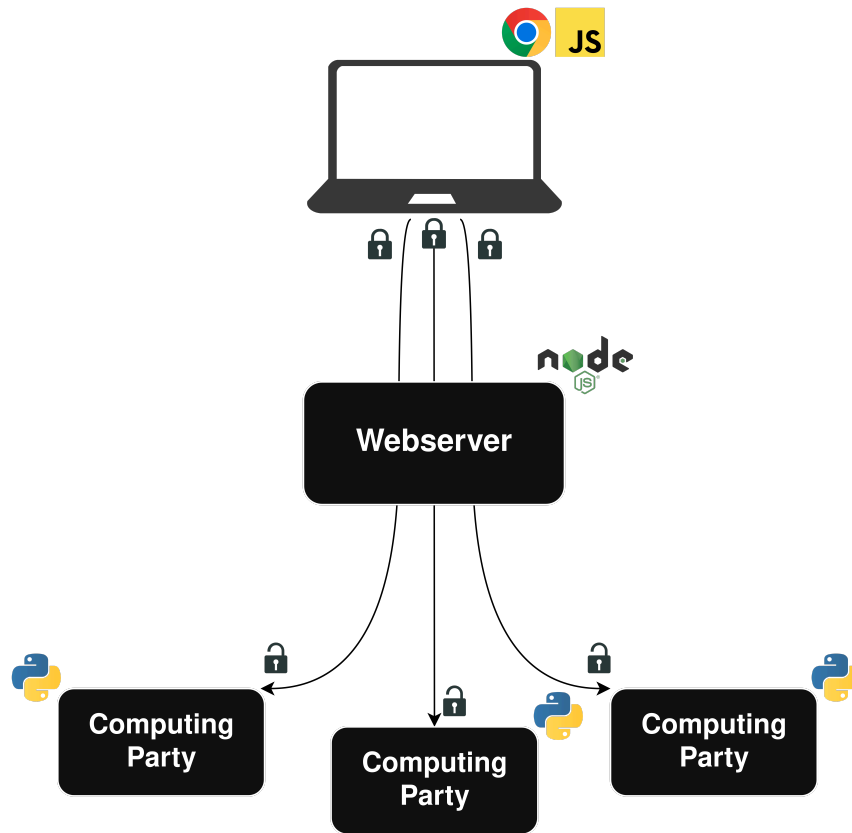
Two Approaches to Political Polling



What about privacy?

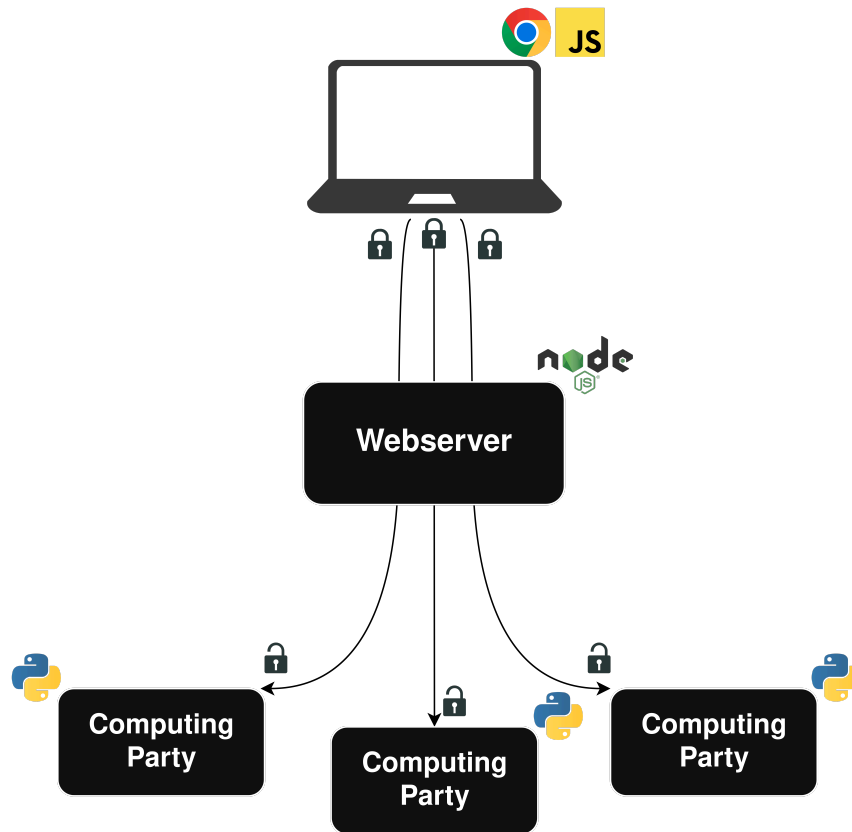
System Design

System Design



System Design

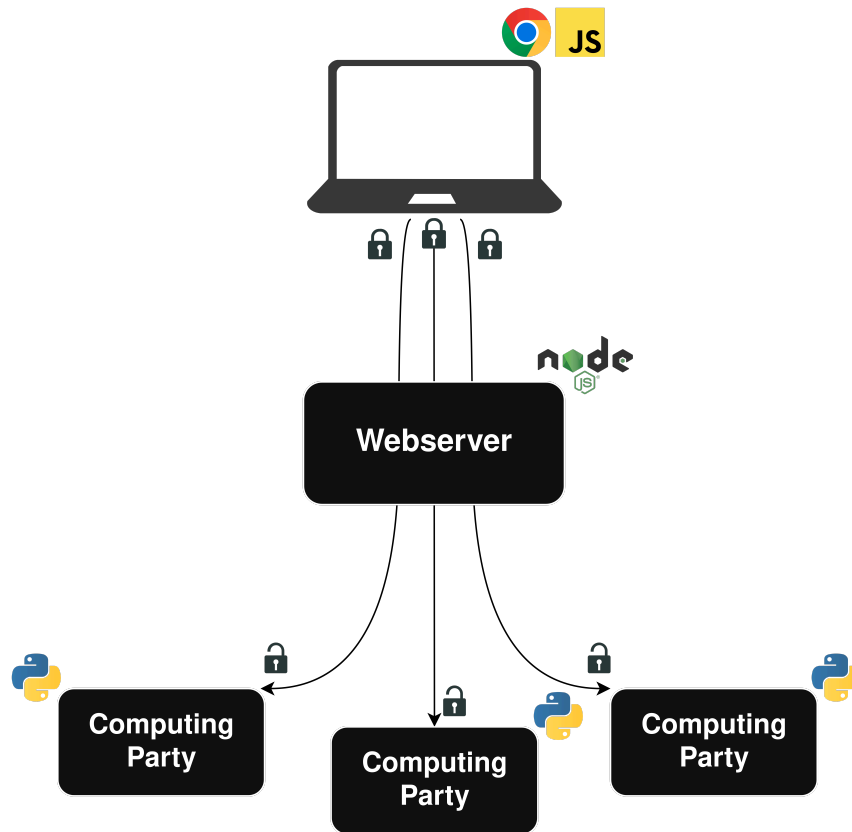
Users



System Design

Users

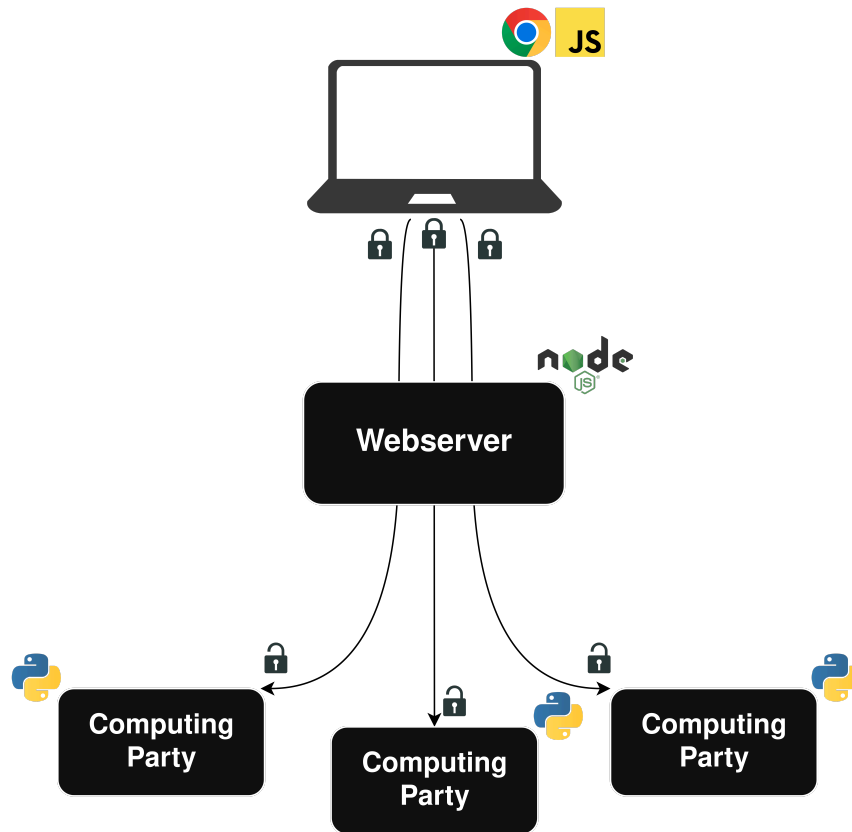
- Built a Chrome plugin to monitor web behavior



System Design

Users

- Built a Chrome plugin to monitor web behavior
- Client-side secret sharing and encryption

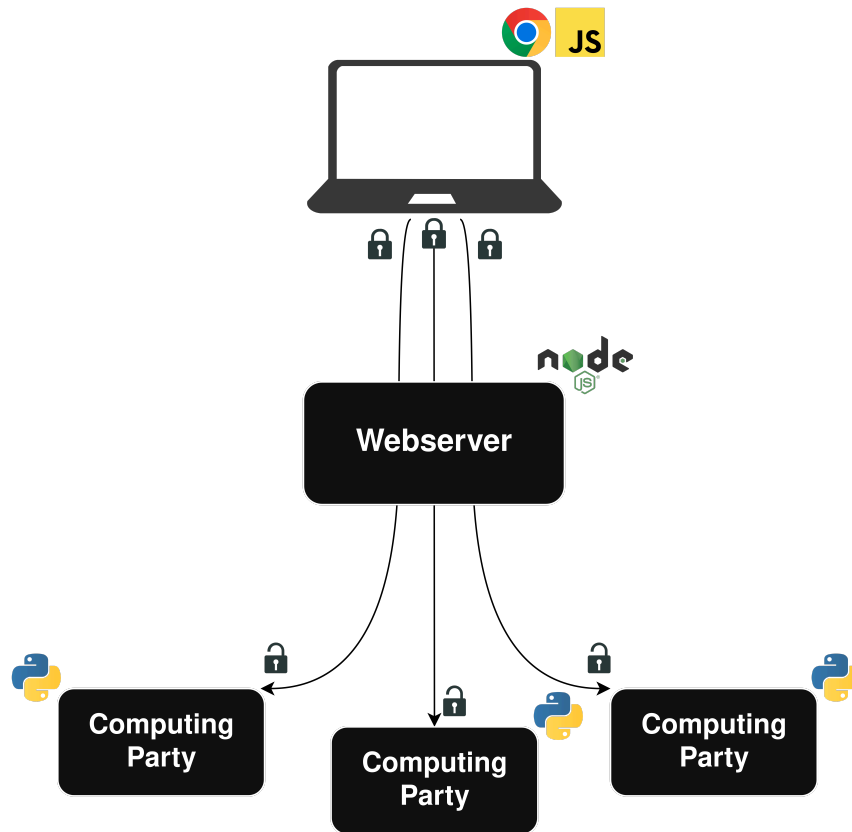


System Design

Users

- Built a Chrome plugin to monitor web behavior
- Client-side secret sharing and encryption

Intermediate webserver



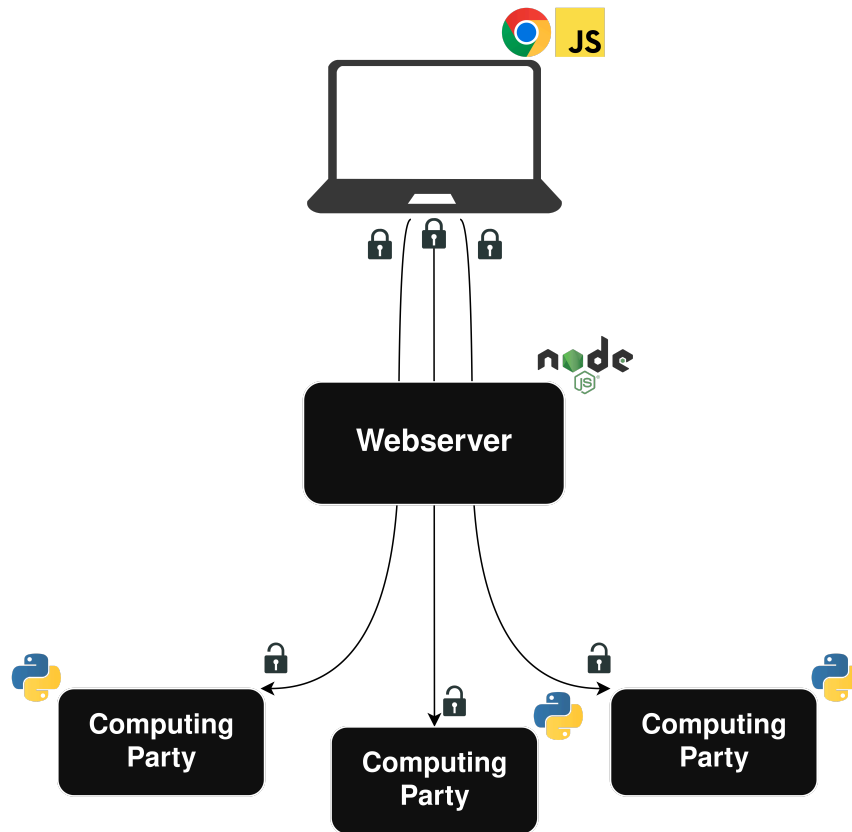
System Design

Users

- Built a Chrome plugin to monitor web behavior
- Client-side secret sharing and encryption

Intermediate webserver

- Simplifies interaction with users



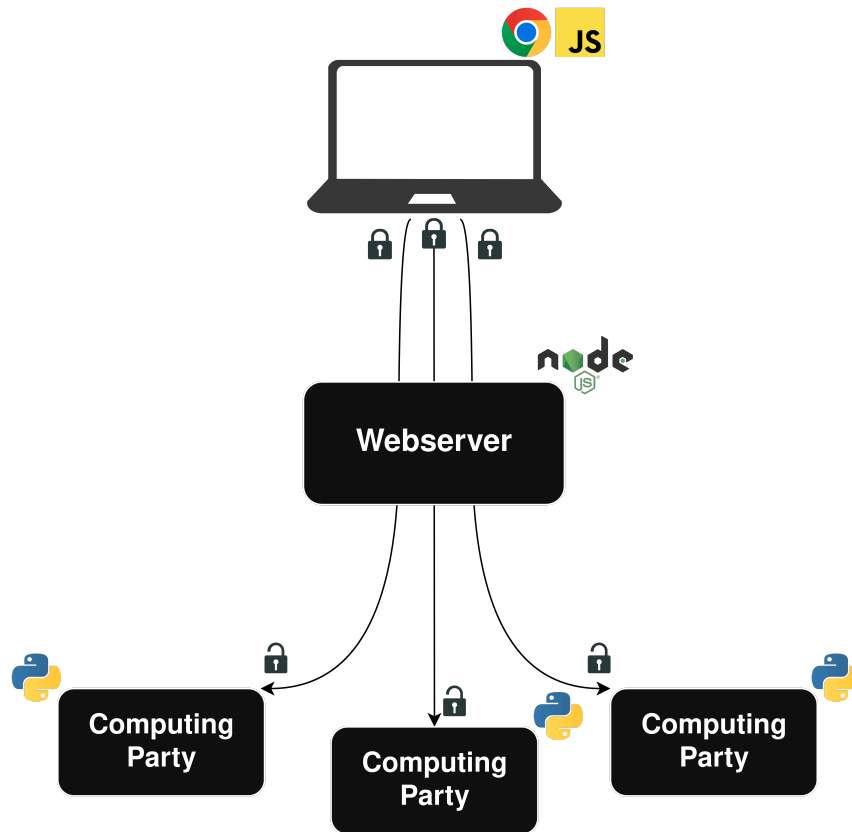
System Design

Users

- Built a Chrome plugin to monitor web behavior
- Client-side secret sharing and encryption

Intermediate webserver

- Simplifies interaction with users
- Collects basic metadata



System Design

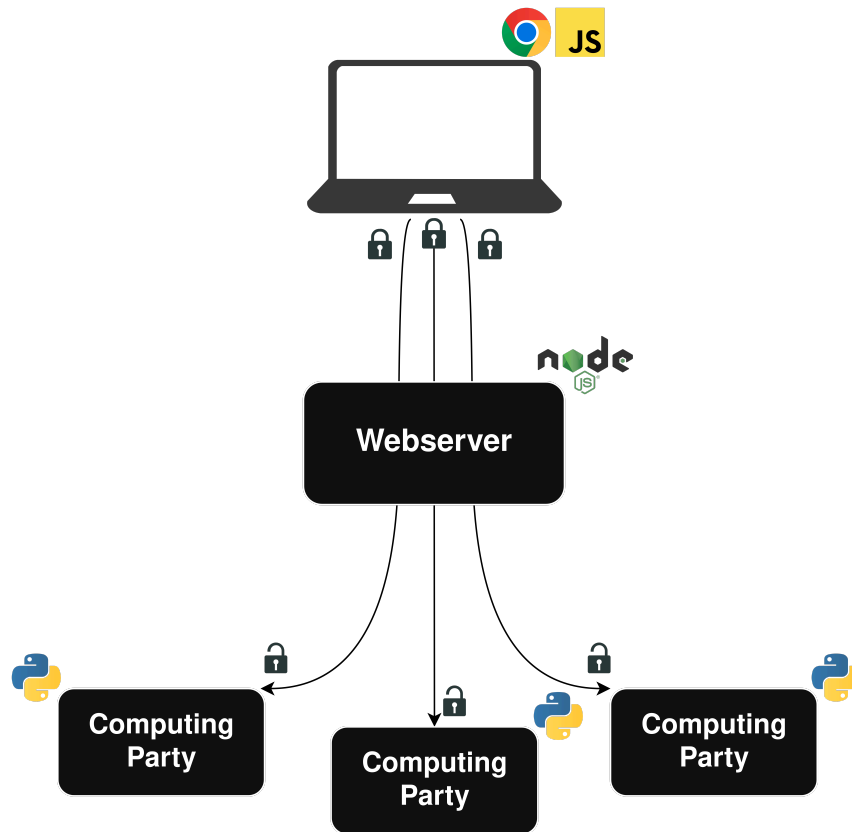
Users

- Built a Chrome plugin to monitor web behavior
- Client-side secret sharing and encryption

Intermediate webserver

- Simplifies interaction with users
- Collects basic metadata

MPC backend



System Design

Users

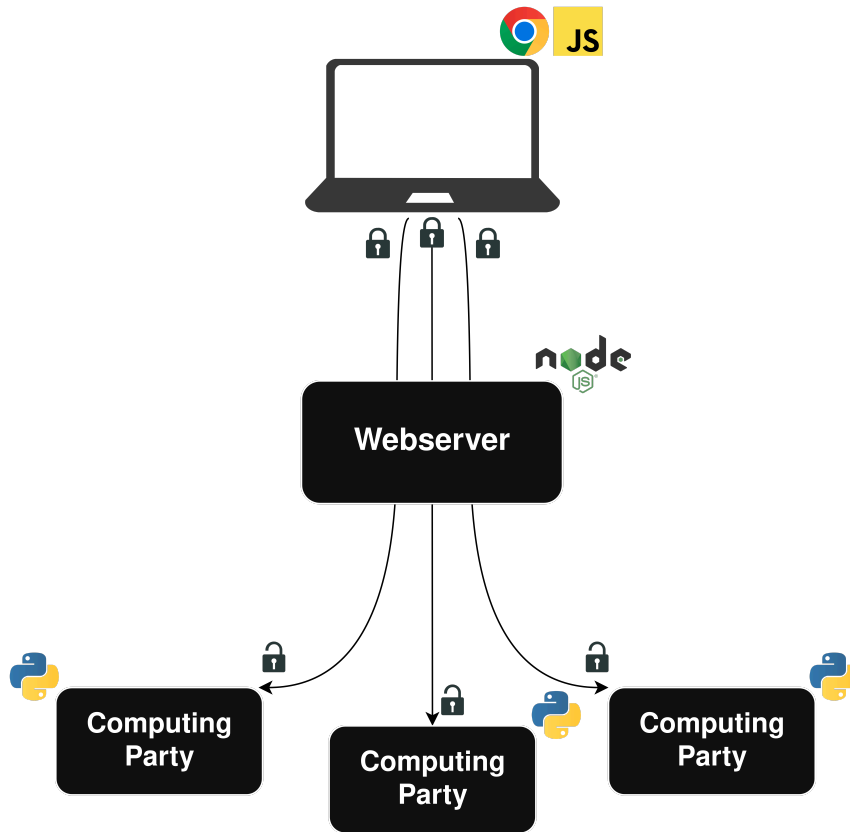
- Built a Chrome plugin to monitor web behavior
- Client-side secret sharing and encryption

Intermediate webserver

- Simplifies interaction with users
- Collects basic metadata

MPC backend

- Trains a model on the data



System Design

Users

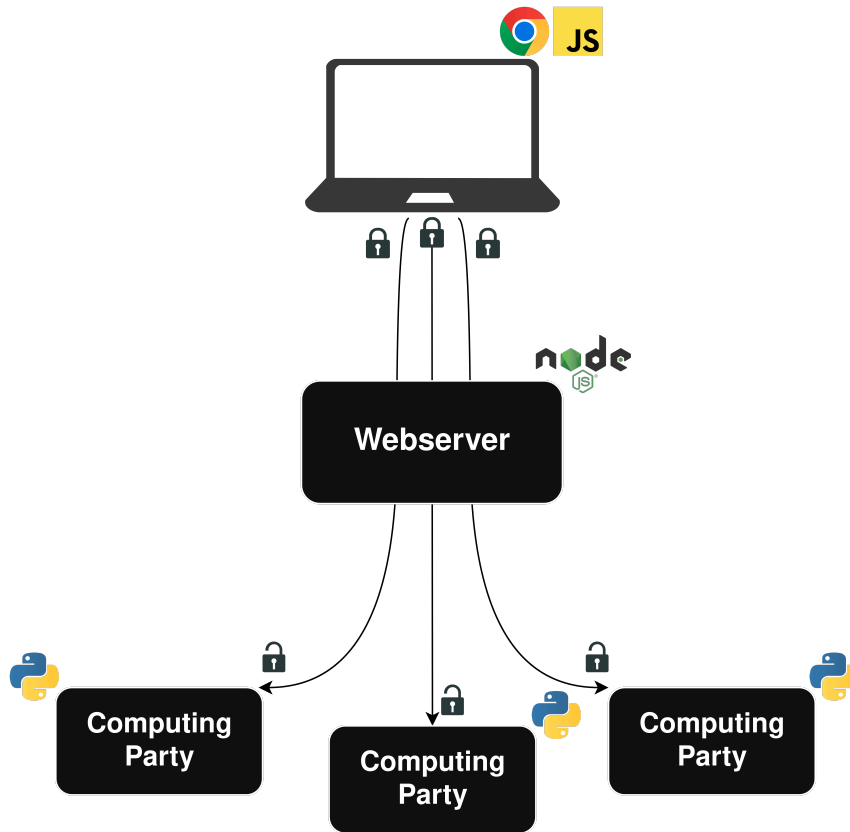
- Built a Chrome plugin to monitor web behavior
- Client-side secret sharing and encryption

Intermediate webserver

- Simplifies interaction with users
- Collects basic metadata

MPC backend

- Trains a model on the data
- We use and augment the CrypTen MPC library



Lessons Learned and Future Directions

Lessons Learned and Future Directions

1. Data integrity matters

Lessons Learned and Future Directions

1. Data integrity matters

- Focus on verifying user honesty in reporting

Lessons Learned and Future Directions

1. Data integrity matters

- Focus on verifying user honesty in reporting
- Balancing more extensive tracking with privacy

Lessons Learned and Future Directions

1. Data integrity matters

- Focus on verifying user honesty in reporting
- Balancing more extensive tracking with privacy

2. Strengthen the threat model

Lessons Learned and Future Directions

1. Data integrity matters

- Focus on verifying user honesty in reporting
- Balancing more extensive tracking with privacy

2. Strengthen the threat model

- AWS as a single point of failure

Lessons Learned and Future Directions

1. Data integrity matters

- Focus on verifying user honesty in reporting
- Balancing more extensive tracking with privacy

2. Strengthen the threat model

- AWS as a single point of failure
- Anonymous payments

Thank You!

sambux@bu.edu

